THE MEXICAN WAR.

REVIEW

OF THE ANNUAL MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO CONGRESS, DECEMBER 7, 1847.

CHAPTER I.

When, on the 13th day of May of last year, the passage of the Act of Congress, recognising the existence of War with Mexico, was announced in the Washington newspapers, it was predicted by the writer of this Review that by the larger portion of the People the information would be received with alarm—alarm justly excited by the wilfulness and recklessness with which the Nation had been plunged into a foreign war, which, as the People were in no particular prepared for, they were in no way forwarned of. For ourselves, we were not taken wholly by surprise by the news. In the statesmanship of the Executive, whatever confidence we were disposed to place had been shaken by the almost daily demonstrations by its official organ during the first year of its existence. We had watched its successive developments, gradually disclosing a settled purpose to make war upon Mexico, in the event of not succeeding in intimidating her into a prompt submission to the demands which the President intended to make upon her. That organ (the government paper) was hardly a week old before its readers were transported, in imagination, to the "Halls of Montezuma," which were to be occupied by the United States as the crowning act of "a second conquest of Mexico." The tocsin being sounded, volunteers were to flock from the West to the scene of action, and to carry everything before them. The government paper taught us, also, *how* the war was to be brought on by which this conquest was to be effected. It foresaw, by many months, the march of our army from Corpus Christi (where, as every one knows, Mexico never intended to disturb it) to the Rio Grande; foresaw that the Mexicans might cross the Rio Grande, and that, if they did, "blood would be shed," and "war must ensue." When, therefore, the prediction was realized—when the catastrophe arrived, however it shocked, it can scarcely be said to have *surprised* us.

Towers, printer, corner of D and 7th sts., opposite National Intelligencer.

Of the facility and precipitancy with which the purposes of the Executive came to be sustained by the Legislative authority, we cannot say the same. We were both surprised and alarmed to find how easily, on the impulse of the moment, blindfold and gagged, Congress could be driven to lend its countenance to those purposes. Blindfold and gagged, we repeat. Nor is the expression too strong; for, *before* the news of the dangerous position of our Army was communicated by the Executive to Congress, committees of both Houses had been got together (on the Sabbath) and measures prepared in concert with the Executive, which, the next day, on receiving the President's Message of form, without waiting to have the papers accompanying it read over for the information of Members, were forced through the House of Representatives. Nor, even to a body excited as the House was by the stirring news from the Rio Grande, did the ruling party in the House venture to propose the false and obnoxious Preamble of the Bill until after all deliberation and debate had been precluded on a question as momentous certainly as ever came before Congress. Had there been nothing else alarming in this Declaration of War with Mexico, the despotism thus exercised over the minority of the Representative body, repeated on the following day in the Senatorial body, (theretofore exempt from such sharp practice,) was of itself sufficient to appal the hearts of those accustomed, as we have been, to regard the rights of minorities as not less sacred than those of majorities, and, among them, the right of proposing amendments to or remonstrating against any proposition coming before them. The minority in each House was thus subjected by a most arbitrary and malignant exercise of party power, without being allowed a moment for deliberation, to the alternative of voting for a bill with a preamble, the falsehood of which they saw and detested, or of refusing to vote for enactments (supplies of men and money) to which, all lavish as they were, they would, perhaps, but for the Preamble, not have been a dissenting voice.

Whatever alarm we and our readers felt at this beginning, has certainly been fully justified by the progress of events. Even that precipitation of Congress—the Preamble, affirming two distinct falsehoods—that tyranny by which a vote was extorted from the two Houses, have been continually appealed to by the Executive organs as evidence of the unanimity of the national will in approbation of the war. In the Message before us, that appeal is repeated, accompanied with a statement, in terms, that the declaration that "the War exists by the act of Mexico" was passed "with great unanimity" in Congress; though it must be known to the Executive that but a small majority in either House of Congress approved that declaration, many members declaring their repugnance to it, some their utter abhorrence of it. Votes taken in both Houses of Congress at the second session of the same Congress plainly established this fact, had there before been any reason to doubt it. The popular elections which have intervened certainly leave no excuse for a doubt upon any man's mind that a majority of the People of the United States are *against* this war, and its authors.

Instead of relinquishing, in deference to the popular will, thus clearly expressed, any part of his original scheme of conquering and annexing a considerable portion of the territory of Mexico, the President now comes to Congress and demands its concurrence in a plan for colonizing and annexing almost one-half of Mexico, with a recommendation to continue the

war until he, the Conqueror, *conquers* all the residue of that unhappy Republic, in the event of her not willingly severing from her body her most valuable provinces. Instead of advising a Peace, which this Government might have at any day on terms of honor, he informs Congress, in a sanguinary strain, and almost in the dialect of the shambles, that he is persuaded "that the best means of *vindicating the national honor* and interest, and of bringing the war to an *honorable* close, will be to prosecute it *with increased energy and power* IN THE VITAL PARTS *of the enemy's country!*" He knows that he and his war stand condemned by his own countrymen. He cannot, if he would, mistake the sentiment of the People; and yet he craves more conquest, more butchery: he demands a deeper penetration into the vitals of our adversary, and yet further waste of the blood and treasure of his own country.

Before he take captive our senses by the seductive incitements, in which his Message abounds, to a yet wider course of rash ambition and suicidal aggrandizement, let us stop for a moment to consider upon what grounds he places and justifies the career of cruelty and conquest in which he has already embarked our country. We are glad that the President has, in his Message, prefaced his recommendations as to the future with a summary statement of the causes of complaint heretofore alleged by him as being of prior date to the war, together with his understanding of how the war began. A single paragraph includes the whole story; and, as we propose to examine it with some particularity, we here republish it:

"It is sufficient on the present occasion to say, that the wanton violation of the rights of person and property of our citizens committed by Mexico, her repeated acts of bad faith through a long series of years, and her disregard of solemn treaties stipulating for indemnity to our injured citizens, not only constituted ample cause of war on our part, but were of such an aggravated character as would have justified us before the whole world in resorting to this extreme remedy. With an anxious desire to avoid a rupture between the two countries, we forbore for years to assert our clear rights by force, and continued to seek redress for the wrongs we had suffered by amicable negotiation, in the hope that Mexico might yield to pacific counsels and the demands of justice. In this hope we were disappointed. Our minister of peace sent to Mexico was insultingly rejected. The Mexican Government refused even to hear the terms of adjustment which he was authorized to propose; and finally, under wholly unjustifiable pretexts, involved the two countries in war, by invading the territory of the State of Texas, striking the first blow, and shedding the blood of our citizens on our own soil."

In undertaking to review these averments by the Executive, now that they are again offered in his justification, and in support of that war *ad internacionem* against Mexico which he recommends to Congress, we are well aware that no force can be added to the reasoning, nor any strength to the conclusions of the admirable tract from the pen of the venerable, patriotic, and learned ALBERT GALLATIN, in relation to the Mexican War. To his authority upon any question of public law or national obligation, we, at least, who have known him from the days of his great public services in the Public Councils, first as a leader of the Republican party in Congress; next as a Member of the Cabinet of President JEFFERSON during all of his Administration, and of that of Mr. MADISON until he was called to represent his country abroad as the associate of ADAMS, CLAY, and BAYARD in the great Negotiation which ended in the Peace of Ghent—we are bound by every sentiment of respect and gratitude to pay a deference so profound, that it would be with the greatest distrust of our own judgment we should entertain any opinion on a public question materially different from his. Happy and proud are we to find, that, on the subject of the causes and the

character of this war, his views are in full accord with our own. Most fortunate for our country do we consider it, that he has been willing and able to come forward in the present emergency, to instruct and counsel his fellow-citizens. However earnestly and honestly the Press may have done its duty; however ably and fearlessly distinguished Statesmen of the present day may have exposed and denounced the new career upon which our country has entered as the sole disturber of the peace of the world; however bright and high the statesmanship which the great Patriot of the West has so recently brought to bear upon this great question, the Address of Mr. GALLATIN has shown it was yet possible for a wise and able man to add to the force of even our convictions. Most fortunate, we repeat, do we consider this opportune contribution to the common stock of knowledge of one standing in the foremost rank of intellectual greatness, and yet apart from the passions of the day and above them: one who, after a most distinguished career of public service, left popularity and reputation unexhausted, and quitted high trusts whilst they yet courted his acceptance: one of the foremost men, in a word, of that illustrious era of our statesmanship which has now hardly a survivor; one, therefore, almost in the last extremity of age, and yet so fortunate as to have preserved, equally undimmed, its abilities and its honors. To the authority of such a name as that of ALBERT GALLATIN, his recent Address adds a strength of reasoning which nothing in the present day can meet, and that luminous command of all the great principles of Public and of National Law, in which he had scarcely an equal in his own times, and has now no superior. The trusted coadjutor—and it may even, in Finance and in Diplomacy, be said to have been—the instructor of JEFFERSON, of MADISON, and of MONROE, we have here, as of one rising from the dead, a voice, passionless as it is wise and solemn, the judgment of an antique and genuine sage of Republicanism—yea, of Democracy—upon the entire question of this Presidential War.

Armed and fortified with such a document, it is with unwonted confidence that we proceed once more to expose those hollow pretences and insincere professions of the authors and apologists for the War with Mexico, which have been controverted heretofore with no other apparent effect than to induce a pertinacious repetition of them.

To proceed, however, to the main point, upon the re-assertion of which alone the President relies to justify himself before his own fellow-citizens for his agency in this War, viz. that the Mexican Government "finally, under wholly unjustifiable pretexts, involved the two countries in war, by invading the territory of Texas, striking the first blow, and shedding the blood of our citizens on American soil." *Not one word of this is true.* We regret the necessity, but the President imposes upon us the obligation, of demonstrating the utter falsity of the whole of it. Mexico did *not* involve the two countries in war: Mexico did *not* invade the territory of Texas: Mexico did *not* strike the first blow: Mexico did *not* shed the blood of our citizens on our own soil.

This whole question, it will be seen, resolves itself into one of territorial boundary.

Did, at the breaking out of this war, the territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande (Del Norte) belong *to Mexico* or to *the United States*?

It did not belong to the United States. The Republic of Texas had no *title* to it. She had not even a respectable *claim* to it. She pretended to

no such title when she called a Convention to form her Constitution; for not a member was called to that Convention from any portion of the territory bounding on the Rio Grande.

Nor when, in her Constitution, she apportioned the Representation in her Legislature among the several districts of her territory, did she enumerate any districts lying upon the Rio Grande as entitled to representation in the Texan General Assembly. The whole country on the Rio Grande, and indeed the whole country west of the Nueces, except the small settlement of San Patricio, was exclusively in possession of the Mexicans, until the army of the United States marched into it, driving before it the Mexican civil officers and the peaceful inhabitants. Texas having no title to the territory, the annexation of Texas to this Union could confer none upon the United States. Were a peace to be made to-morrow on the basis of leaving things as they were before the war, the territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande would still constitute a part of the Mexican States of Tamaulipas, &c.

This state of the fact is none of our first discovering, much less of our imagining. We derive nearly all our information on the subject from the highest Democratic authority. When the Treaty with Texas, by which she undertook to convey to the United States a western boundary to the Rio Grande, was depending in the Senate, Mr. Senator BENTON (high authority on the subject) indignantly denounced it as an attempted fraud and outrage.

"I wash my hands," said he, "of all attempts *to dismember the Mexican Republic, by seizing her dominions in New Mexico, Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas.* The treaty, *in all that relates to the boundary of the Rio Grande, is an act of unparalleled outrage on Mexico. It is the seizure of two thousand miles of her territory,* without a word of explanation with her, and by virtue of a treaty with Texas, to which she is no party."

Mr. BENTON further declared that the claim set up by Texas by the Treaty, if maintained, would cut off "the capital and forty towns and villages of New Mexico, now and always as fully under the dominion of Mexico as Quebec and all the towns of Canada are under the dominion of Great Britain."

Mr. B. closed his speech by offering the following resolution:

Resolved, That the incorporation of the left bank of the Rio del Norte into the American Union, by virtue of a treaty with Texas, comprehending, as the said incorporation would do, a portion of the Mexican departments of New Mexico, Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas, would be *an act of direct aggression upon Mexico, for all the consequences of which the United States would stand responsible.*

To the same effect, that great Democratic leader, the Hon. SILAS WRIGHT, (whose late death has been so justly lamented by men of all parties,) who was present during the whole debate upon the Texas Treaty and gave his vote against its ratification, declared to his constituents, in a speech delivered at Watertown, as follows:

"I felt it my duty to vote against the ratification of the treaty for the annexation. I believed that the treaty, *from the boundaries that must be implied from it,* embraced a country *to which Texas had no claim, over which she had never asserted jurisdiction, and which she had no right to cede.*"

But, many years before the date of this debate, the records of the United States had borne testimony to the true boundary of Texas. In 1836 an Agent was despatched by the President of the United States (Gen. JACKSON) to examine and report upon the condition of Texas, which had then

established an independent Government; and in his report, dated in August of that year, he reported that "the political limits of Texas proper, previous to the last revolution, were *the Nueces river on the west;* along the Red River on the north; the Sabine on the east; and the Gulf of Mexico on the south."

At the time of the consummation of the act of annexation, Mr. DONELSON being the Chargé d'Affaires of the United States to that young Republic, communicated freely with his Government as to the position of things in Texas. From his letters we extract the following passages, showing what was the *fact* as to the limits of the territory actually occupied by Texas, even at that time:

"Corpus Christi is said to be as healthy as Pensacola, a convenient place for supplies, and THE MOST WESTERN POINT NOW OCCUPIED BY TEXAS."—*Letter to Secretary of State, June* 30, 1845.

"The occupation of the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, you are aware, *is a disputed question.* Texas holds Corpus Christi. MEXICO HOLDS THE BRASOS DE SANTIAGO."—*Letter to General Taylor, June* 28, 1845.

"The joint resolution of our Congress *left the question an open one,* and the preliminary proposition made by this Government, under the auspices of the British and French Governments, as the basis of a definitive treaty with Mexico, left the question in *the same state.* And although *this Government* [the Government of Texas] has since indicated a point on the Rio Grande for the occupation of our troops, I did not consider this circumstance as varying the question, since the President [of Texas] but a few weeks before issued a proclamation suspending hostilities between Texas and Mexico, the practical effect of which was to leave the question precisely *as it stood when our joint resolution passed*—MEXICO IN POSSESSION OF ONE PORTION OF THE TERRITORY, AND TEXAS OF ANOTHER." "The proclamation of a truce between the two nations, founded on propositions mutually acceptable to them, *leaving the question of boundary not only an open one, but* MEXICO IN POSSESSION OF THE EAST BANK OF THE RIO GRANDE, seemed to me inconsistent with the expectation that in defence of *the claim* of Texas our troops should march immediately to that river. What the Executive of Texas had determined not to fight for, but to settle by negotiation, to say the least of it, could as well be left to the United States on the same conditions."

"The question was whether, under the circumstances, we should take a position to make war *for this claim,* in the face of *an acknowledgement on the part of this Government that it could be settled by negotiation.* Iat once decided that we should take no position, but *should regard only as within the limits of our protection that portion of territory* ACTUALLY POSSESSED BY TEXAS, *and which she did not consider as subject to negotiation."—Letter to Mr. Buchanan, July* 11, 1843.

"Your purpose will be the defence of Texas, if she is invaded by Mexico, and *you will be in position at Corpus Christi, San Antonio,* AND OTHER POINTS ON THE NUECES, ready to act according to circumstances."—*To Gen. Taylor, July* 7, 1845.

These extracts taken together establish, upon the evidence of our Government itself, through its Diplomatic Representative in Texas, that Mexico was *in possession of the territory west of the Nueces* (except the county of Patricio) and Texas of the territory east of the Nueces, with the addition of Patricio; that Mexico was admitted by our own Envoy to be *in possession of the east bank of the Rio Grande,* and that Corpus Christi was *the most western point then occupied by Texas.* These admissions from a source so well-informed, so free from bias in favor of any interest but that of the United States, (including Texas,) are fatal to every pretension of territorial right on the part of Texas between the Rio Grande and the Nueces, the small county of Patricio perhaps excepted.

All that remains, therefore, to sustain the pretension of our Administration that the boundary of Texas extended to the Rio Grande, and that by her annexation the Rio Grande became the boundary of the United States, is the act of the Legislature of Texas declaring its boundary to extend to the Rio Grande. If that act could be considered of any effect whatever,

it would at most leave ground for controversy and negotiation, as was assumed by Mr. Donelson. But that act itself was a mere nullity.

To that effect we have the opinion of Senator WOODBURY, (now an Associate Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States,) in his Speech in favor of ratifying the Treaty of Annexation:

"Texas, *by a mere law*," said he, "*could acquire no title* but what she conquered from Mexico, and actually governed. Hence, though her law includes more than the ancient Texas, *she could hold and convey only that*, or, at the uttermost, only what *she exercised clear jurisdiction over*."

Texas never had exercised jurisdiction of *any* sort over any territory on the Rio Grande, and could not therefore by possibility convey to the United States any title to it.

To the same effect we have the authority of Mr. GALLATIN, which saves us and our readers the trouble of searching further on the subject:

"The Republic of Texas did, by an act of December, 1836, declare the Rio del Norte to be its boundary. It will not be seriously contended that a nation has a right, by a law of its own, to determine what is or shall be the boundary between it and another country. The act was nothing more than the expression of the *wishes* or *pretensions* of the Government. *As regards right, the act of Texas is a perfect* NULLITY."

It is thus conclusively demonstrated that the territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande never had passed out of the possession or right of Mexico, and was in no sense "American soil," or territory of the United States. The fact is, moreover, too notorious to need to be here dwelt upon, that the army of the United States, when it neared the Rio Grande, chased the Mexican custom-officers out of their houses, and, when it encamped on the bank of the river, found itself in the midst of a Mexican population, and occupying the corn and cotton-fields which they had fled from in dismay. The flag of the United States was planted by our army, as in defiance, under the guns of a Mexican fort, and at the same time the vessels of our Navy blockaded the mouth of the Rio Grande—a river running, from its source to the ocean, altogether between Mexican banks, without a Texan settlement of any sort within a hundred miles of it. Nay, General TAYLOR himself, after literally obeying the Executive orders by occupying a position opposite Matamoros, thus reported to the War Department (under date of April 6, 1846,) his proceedings:

"On our side a battery for four eighteen-pounders will be completed, and the guns placed *in* battery to-day. *These guns bear directly upon the public square of Matamoros, and within good range for demolishing the town.* THEIR OBJECT CANNOT BE MISTAKEN BY THE ENEMY."

The Enemy! *What* enemy? Does not this language prove that the brave old General understood very well what he was sent there for? War did not exist until he had planted a battery of guns bearing directly upon the public square of Matamoros, the object of which, as he very truly reports to Mr. MARCY, could not be mistaken by his adversary. The boundary to the Rio Grande claimed by the President upon the strength of the declaratory act of the Texan Legislature, which has been proven to be not even plausible, derived no strength from the affirmation by the President in his Message that the jurisdiction of the United States had been extended to the Rio Grande. Yet that affirmation—even more of a nullity, if such a thing were possible, than the act of the Texan Congress itself—made the ground upon which the Executive was willing to place a war with Mexico,

and upon which he did in fact involve the nation in this cruel war, by marching an army into a territory to which the United States had no more claim than it had to any other province of Mexico. The shores of the Dead Sea were not less within the boundaries of the United States than were the banks of the Rio Grande. Yet upon no better title than this, under the orders of the President, the Headquarters of the Army of the United States were removed from the encampment of Corpus Christi to a point one hundred and sixty miles within the Mexican boundary, a battery was planted in front of the first Mexican fortress met with, and a blockade established of the Rio Grande, (Del Norte,) without the navigation of which that fort could not be subsisted; and thus was war made upon Mexico—the Government of that country, to the latest moment, protesting and deprecating the resort to so dire an alternative. The latest of these protests by that Government was in the form of a Manifesto by the President, (PAREDES,) which declared (says Mr. SLIDELL in a letter to Mr. BUCHANAN, dated April 2, 1846,) that "until the National Congress of Mexico shall have considered the question, no act of aggression will be committed against the United States by the Mexican Government, but that it will repel any [aggression] that may be offered by them." The protests by the Mexican *military* authorities against the invasion of the Territory of Tamaulipas (the territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande) as an act of war, were continued up to the moment of the establishment of the blockade of the Rio Grande.

And by this invasion of Mexican territory, under peremptory orders from Washington to the Commanding General, was the war *begun by the President of the United States*, without the knowledge of Congress, though then in session. Nor then nor since has there been a drop of American (United States) blood shed by Mexico on American soil: nor then nor since has a Mexican soldier or armed man set his foot upon American soil, (Texas proper included.)

CHAPTER II.

The ground upon which the President placed the War, when, having got into it, he was obliged to call upon Congress to sustain him in it, is, as we have shown, so far from being solid or true, that it is directly the reverse. So far from Mexico having invaded the United States, our President invaded Mexico; and, so far from the war having "existed" by the act of Mexico, it existed—as much as it is possible for the United States to be *at war* without the consent of the war-making power—by the act of Mr. POLK alone. Nor, in our opinion, did it exist without premeditation. It had been contemplated as possible, at least from the moment of his coming to the Presidency. The government paper, as we have already remarked, had not been in existence more than a week before, in that mirror of the Presidential sentiment, the invasion, and even the conquest of Mexico, were foreshadowed—we may say predicted—in the event of Mexico venturing to exercise any authority on the east bank of the Rio Grande. As early as June, 1845—[mark the date]—the Commander of the Naval force of the United States in the Pacific was directed to look out for a war with Mexico,

and, on receipt of the news of it, to possess himself of the port of San Francisco, on the coast of California, and such other ports as his force would permit. He had been so instructed even earlier than this: for the letter to him begins: "Your attention is *still* particularly directed," &c. to the contingency of war. Congress was to meet in the December following. Early in November, the Message of the President to Congress being in a state of preparation, already contained, as we had reason to know, a recommendation of hostilities against Mexico, in some form or other, on the ground of unsatisfied claims of our citizens, of unpaid indemnity money, and other alleged grievances. On the 9th of November, however, just three weeks before the session began, information having been received from our Consul at Mexico that the Mexican Government was willing to receive a Commissioner to negotiate concerning the Texas boundary, the Message was perforce changed. The body of the indictment against that Government was indeed retained, as the reader will perceive if he will take the trouble to refer to the Message itself; the *recommendation* of reprisals, or of war in some form, being the only thing omitted. A Minister Plenipotentiary was sent instead of a Commissioner—our Government refusing to treat on the boundary question without mixing it up with matters with which it had no sort of connexion—and the correspondence between our Minister and the Mexican authorities was still going on when the army of General TAYLOR was, as if for the purpose of precipitating events, marched from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande. About the same time, as we know from the President's Message of last year, he was himself in secret negotiation with the exiled Military Chieftian, SANTA ANNA, for what precise purpose can only be inferred from the fact, that the day after *the war* was declared to exist, directions were given to our vessels of war to allow him to pass into Mexico. All these concurring circumstances show that war was premeditated by the President.

This view of the matter is sustained by *documents* which the Executive has itself from time to time laid before Congress.

In the opening of his *first* Annual Message, many of our readers will well remember, the President informed Congress and the Nation, that by the annexation of Texas, "the jurisdiction of the United States, which, at the formation of the Federal Constitution was bounded by the St. Mary's on the Atlantic, had passed the Capes of Florida, *and been peacefully* EXTENDED TO THE DEL NORTE." This unfounded assumption, if in one sense it is most unhappily not true now, was not less untrue in the other sense, when, by thus ostentatiously asserting it, the President took the initial in the conflict with Mexico in which our country has been since involved. *This declaration* was the *root* of the War, which sprung up less than six months thereafter.

In the same Message the President informed Congress that, on the ground of certain claims of our citizens upon Mexico, which before the annexation of Texas were in the course of amicable adjustment and payment, he would then have recommended "ULTERIOR MEASURES *of redress* for wrongs and injuries so long borne," if it had not been that Mexico had shown a willingness to receive a Minister; (which Minister, it afterwards appeared, from the published correspondence with the Mexican authorities, was to have been a *Commissioner* to treat of the question of Texas and the Boundary merely.) Instead of such a Commissioner, the President informed Congress that he had sent a *Minister Plenipotentiary* to settle *all* differ-

ence between the two countries, claims included, as he could not think of consenting to settle the Texas dispute by itself. That Minister was instructed, the Message said, to bring the negotiation with which he was charged to the earliest possible conclusion; and, until that "result" should be known, the President *forebore*, he said, to recommend to Congress the "ulterior measures" against Mexico which he had intended.

The instructions to our Minister to Mexico, as to the *objects* of that mission, though a very material part of the history of this unhappy war, have hitherto been withheld from Congress and the People; but the substance of them was sufficiently disclosed in the Message, and through the official gazette, to alarm the pride of the Government of Mexico, and to obstruct the reception of a Minister sent to demand concessions of territory from it, and to intimate war as the alternative. If any doubt remained of the hostile temper of our Administration, the *published* correspondence between the Mexican Government and the Minister whom the President sent to Mexico would dissipate it. "The question," said our Minister to the Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations, "has now reached a point where *words must give place to acts*;" adding that "he was consoled by the reflection that no honorable efforts *to avert the calamities of war* have been spared by his Government." This intimation was in reply to a letter of March 17, 1846, in the course of which the Mexican Minister, aware of the orders to our army to march to the Rio Grande and to our navy to rendezvous at or near its mouth, says that the responsibility of war, should it come, would rest upon the United States, who were "proposing peace at the very moment when they are causing their squadrons and their troops to advance upon the ports and the frontiers of Mexico, exacting a humiliation impossible to be submitted to, in order to find a pretext, if no reason can be found, which may occasion the breaking out of hostilities."—*House Doc. 1st. Sess. 29th Con. No.* 196.

Among the allegations of the Official Government Editor, in reply to the preceding chapter, is the following:

"The Intelligencer does not even pretend to make any attempt to shake the immoveable foundation of fact and argument on which the President, in his annual Message of December last, placed the rightfulness of our claim and of the claim of Texas to the boundary of the Rio Grande."

Whether we did or did not make an "attempt" to shake the President's foundation, &c. our readers know as well as we: whether we *succeeded* or not, is another matter. We have at least, it is clear, failed in convincing the government editor, although we produced record evidence of every fact to which we appealed. For his special advantage, we will try another line of demonstration. If the government editor will not believe *us*, will he believe the President? We quote from his Message, still before us, the following:

"New Mexico is a frontier province, and has never been of any considerable value to Mexico. From its locality, it is naturally connected with our western settlements. *The territorial limits of the State of Texas, too, as defined by her laws, before her admission into our Union,* EMBRACE ALL THAT PORTION OF NEW MEXICO LYING EAST OF THE RIO GRANDE, while Mexico still claims to hold this territory as a part of her dominions. The adjustment of this question of boundary is important."

This is all true. If the "laws" of Texas on the subject were not a mere and sheer nulity so far as they pretend to establish a boundary to which the State had no color of title, New Mexico east of the Rio Grande is as much a part of Texas as the country between the Nueces and the Rio

Grande. But all this territory was alike Mexican. No part of it was brought within the limits of the State of Texas by her revolution, or by right of conquest. No part of it, therefore, was or could be conveyed by Texas to the United States. The President himself calls it a Province of Mexico, called "New Mexico," and under that character and title claims to have *conquered* it, and recommends its annexation to the Union as by conquest. If it was "New Mexico," as the President says it was, how could it be Texas?

One and the same rule, it is perfectly clear, must be applicable to *all* the territory east of the Rio Grande heretofore belonging to Mexico. It is *all* either still Mexican, or it is Texan. But the President marches an army into one part of it on the plea of its being his duty to defend "our own soil"—territory of the United States, derived from Texas—and invades and conquers the other, demanding a cession of it as a State of Mexico, and now recommending to Congress to establish a Territorial Government within it!

"The Commissioner of the United States was authorized," says the Message, "to obtain a *cession* to the United States of the [Mexican] Provinces of *New Mexico* and California," &c. The relation of this province of New Mexico to the two nations (the United States and Mexico) was precisely and identically the same as that of the territory lying between the Nueces and the Rio Grande. Yet, as we have said, the President made war, under an alleged indispensable duty to maintain the title of the United States to the one, and in that war conquered the other from Mexico, in order that he might obtain possession of it as an indemnity for the expenses of the war, into which he says Mexico forced us by attempting to defend her own territory from invasion. It is impossible for the President to extricate himself from the horns of this dilemma.

From the beginning of his administration up to this day, the President, animated and impelled, apparently, by an ambition to distinguish himself beyond his predecessor in the annals of annexation, has been all in the wrong upon this Mexican question. Even in his Inaugural Address, though the word "Mexico" is not mentioned, the source is discoverable of all the mischievous proceedings of the Executive, which, however honestly intended, have almost undone the country. In that Address is plainly discernible the germ of that longing for forbidden fruit,* that hankering after the lands of our neighbors, that determination, *per fas aut nefas*, to possess ourselves of them, which have evidently influenced and directed the whole policy of the Executive in regard to Mexico. We refer, of course, to those passages in which the President argues the safety to our political system of *the enlargement of our boundaries*. The meaning of the following sentence, for example, though it attracted little notice at the time, cannot *now* be mistaken: "*To enlarge its limits* [the limits of our Union] is to extend the dominions of peace OVER ADDITIONAL TERRITORIES AND INCREASING MILLIONS." This remark could have had reference only to those territories of Mexico, the annexation of which, as conquered country, the President proposes in the message now before us.

In the first months of his official term, it may be that the President calculated upon accomplishing his purposes without a war with Mexico,

---

* "MEXICO is to us *the forbidden fruit*. The penalty of eating it would be to subject our institutions to political death."—*Mr. Calhoun's speech on the Three Million Bill, in Senate, February* 9, 1847.

though, from the moment of the installation of his confidential editor, the idea of War and Conquest, in some shape or other, seemed continually to haunt his imagination. Within the first six weeks of the existence of the official paper, it was made quite evident that there existed no disposition to pay any respect to the law of our own Congress which enjoined the settlement of the question of boundary by negotiation with Mexico. Even before the consummation of the act of annexation—before its acceptance by the Government and People of Texas—the line of the Rio Grande was repeatedly *claimed*, and, in the event of Mexico proving obstinate and impracticable on that point, "additional annexations" threatened and the acquisition of California prophesied. These demonstrations in fact preceded the order to Gen. TAYLOR of the 15th June, 1845, advising him of the design eventually to press forward his army to the east bank of the Rio Grande; and, so bewitched was the Official Editor with the enchanting prospect which a war with Mexico was expected to unfold to our country, in opening to it "the road to California" and enabling it to "spread far and wide the great principle of self-government," that there seemed at least a willingness on his part to permit, if not a disposition to provoke, a state of things from which such glorious results were anticipated. In September it was plainly indicated that a more belligerent attitude than was then exhibited on the part of Mexico would be quite agreeable to him. On the 10th of that month the purpose of moving our army to the Rio Grande was disclosed, and a day or two after this it was stated that our boundary had been irrevocably planted at the Rio Grande, in regard to which "neither the bullets of the Mexicans nor the paper-shot of their friends in this country" would "be able to shake the determination of our Executive." This determination was rendered the more remarkable from the fact of the repetition of the same identical statement in three several numbers of the official journal, which was equivalent to telling Mexico that any negotiation for it was entirely out of the question.

In the mean time, Gen. TAYLOR, in command of the force stationed at Corpus Christi, had more than once been reminded by the War Department that an advance upon the Rio Grande, at any time, would be acceptable to the Administration. But the wary General knew better than to incur the responsibility of such a movement; and respectfully but positively declined doing so in a letter to the War Department, under date of October 4, 1845:

"Mexico having as yet made no positive declaration of war, *nor committed any overt act of hostilities*, [said the General,] I do not feel at liberty, under my instructions, to make a forward movement to the Rio Grande without authority from the War Department."

About the time that this letter reached Washington, the President was engaged in preparing his first Message to Congress, and had already determined to recommend some measure of hostility against Mexico on the ostensible ground of the unpaid instalments of indemnity, &c.—when information was received here of the willingness of Mexico to receive a Commissioner to treat concerning the boundary question. [We here re-state this point, because it appears to us a very material one in the history of the War in which the President contrived, *without* consulting Congress, afterwards to involve the country.] This induced a change in the Message and in the intended recommendation *to Congress* to resort to war upon Mexico; of which change, and the reason of it, Congress was apprized, in the An-

nual Message of December, 1845, in terms which Mexico perhaps understood, though we doubt whether Congress did.

"*I forbear,*" said the President, "to recommend to Congress such *ulterior measures* of redress for the wrongs and injuries we have so long borne, as *it would have been proper to make* had no such negotiations been instituted."

Instead of a *Commissioner*, as proposed by Mexico, the President sent a Minister Plenipotentiary, whose *instructions* have never been published. If they be ever honestly and fully revealed, it will be found that he was ordered not to negotiate a settlement of the Boundary of Texas (though, as before said, such a negotiation had been directed by Congress) unless in complication with the *cession* to the United States of California, by way of indemnity for the old claims, of which such an exaggerated and distorted account has been given in the several messages of the President. As far as concerns the *claims*, we know from the President himself that Mr. SLIDELL was thus instructed. The President could not, he has informed Congress, for a moment entertain the idea that the claims of our citizens should be postponed, *or separated from the boundary question.* Nor, we presume, (in the absence of documentary proof,) was our Commissioner to be allowed to establish a satisfactory boundary between the United States (Texas included) and Mexico, without securing at the same time a cession of California.

Had the President met the overture of the Mexican Government in a proper spirit, by sending a Commissioner to treat of the only imminent question—the question of boundary; had he not pertinaciously insisted on clogging that question with things having no necessary connexion with it, the boundary might have been amicably settled; the claims of our citizens examined and adjudicated at leisure; and the desired territory on the Northwest Coast acquired by purchase. *And there would have been no war;* for there would have been no pretence for it.

But without waiting for the sanction of Congress to a measure which was itself an act of war—so obviously so, that the Commander of the Army would not take the responsibility of it, though invited to do so—peremptory orders were given, while Mr. SLIDELL was yet in communication with the Government of Mexico, for the march to the Rio Grande. What followed is known to every reader. The war was an inevitable consequence of the march of our Army into the Mexican territory at the time and in the manner in which it took place.

Mexico had indeed regarded and resented the annexation of Texas by the United States, without her consent, as a hostile act, and had threatened retaliation. But threats are not hostilities. She never would have made any approach to our army, much less have attacked it, whilst it confined itself to the known limits of Texas. After she knew of the advance of our army into the Mexican territory, she did no more than defend that territory from aggression which she had before exhausted every art of peace to avert. There would clearly have been no war with Mexico, had the event depended upon her striking the first blow.

We shall not fatigue the reader's attention by retracing, even in brief, the process of reasoning, by which we arrived at the conculsion that the ambition of popularity, to be attained by the President through the acquisition, in one way if not another, of Mexican territory, not on the Rio Grande merely but also on the Northwest coast, was at the bottom of this war;

that the President had made up his mind to accomplish this purpose by means of war, in the event of his failing to accomplish it by diplomacy or by intimidation; and that the march of the Army to the Rio Grande, and the advance of the Navy in the same direction, which the President himself claims to have been predicated on the failure of success in his diplomatic enterprises, brought on the war. Whether intimidation only was intended by that particular movement, is in the breast of the President, and known perhaps only to him and his Maker. But that WAR was *expected* by the Administration, is known beyond doubt from the instructions given to our Naval Commanders twelve months before the conflict actually began. That *Mexico* was really expected to make war *upon the United States* is a supposition not reconcialeable with the degree of intelligence which we certainly do not deny to the President and the Ministers who stand around him. Their declarations to that effect must be considered as merely a mask to their own politic designs. MEXICO, without a ship of war afloat, and utterly destitute of the means of supporting an Army of Invasion—MEXICO *make war upon the United States!* Would it not indeed be a gross contempt of the common sense of the Administration to impute to it any such apprehension? It follows, irresistibly, that the instructions to our Naval Officers in the Pacific to keep a sharp look-out for war, and seize upon the ports of California at the first bruit of it, had reference to a war which might be brought on *accidentally*—to put the most favorable possible construction on the immediate cause of this war—or be made by law, according to the recommendation to Congress which the President has informed us that he at one time designed to make—or be made, as it came to be made, *sponte sua*, (of his own mere will,) by the President.

Referring, however, to his last annual communication to Congress for particulars of his bill of arraignment, the President again recites alleged wrongs by Mexico, through "a long series of years," &c., as being such as not only to constitute ample cause of war, but as would have justified the United States before the whole world in resorting to this extreme remedy. This every one, at all acquainted with history, knows to be gross exaggeration. The long existence of claims for wrongs now alleged to have been so enormous, is of itself proof of the fact that they were not at any time deemed by Congress—the only rightful judge in the case, so far as concerns this Government—to constitute a sufficient cause of war. Most of them had besides been actually adjusted by a treaty between the two countries, which was in the course of faithful execution by Mexico when the hostile demonstrations of our Administration suspended the payment of stipulated indemnities. As to what remained of unadjusted claims, there was nothing, until the occurrence of this war, to prevent their peaceable and even satisfactory adjustment. As to the refusal by Mexico to receive our Minister being, as the President intimates, a sufficient cause of war, it is a sufficient answer to the President that the army was ordered to march to the Rio Grande (where, according to the programme of the Government paper, *the war was to begin)* two months before our Minister was finally refused to be received by the Government of Mexico.

But let it be admitted, for the sake of argument, and for that only, that, according to customs and laws of nations in less civilized, less moral, and less enlightened ages than the present, we really had cause of war with

Mexico, so far as war between two Christian Nations is ever just or necessary: yet, war with Mexico, distracted, weakened, and impoverished as she had long been and then was, with intestine factions and divisions, was neither necessary, magnanimous, nor honorable on our part. Such a war, even for just objects, being unnecessary—the only inevitable effect indeed upon the claims for which it would be waged being to fasten them upon our own Treasury instead of the Mexican—could never redound to the glory of the country, and much less compensate for the rivers of blood and heaps of treasure which have been already wasted in this war.

But, to pass all this by, whether the existing war be just or unjust, necessary or unnecessary, is not the question now at issue between *the President* and *the People*. Was this War the act of the Soverign People of the United States, declared in their name, in the only manner known or acknowledged by the Constitution—by the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress, to whom alone it belongs to determine whether War, at any time or under any circumstances, be just and necessary? Or was it, whether a crime or a mistake, the unauthorized act of the President, to whom the Constitution has denied all power over the question of War? *This* is the true question; nor can all the wire-drawn sophistry and special pleading of the President's Message of last year, referred to in that which is now before us, deceive a single individual, be he Whig or be he Democrat, of common sense or common information, against the well-known and well-authenticated facts in the case. Need we add, that, whoever the President be, who, trampling down the barriers which the Constitution has erected for the protection of the general welfare, and for the security of the life, liberty, and property of the citizen, of his own mere will and pleasure plunges the country into a War, with or without cause—that man is a Despot! The Nation that quietly folds its arms and permits this to be done with impunity, may delude itself with the fancy that it lives under a written Law and Constitution, but it is an idle dream. That Nation is a Nation of slaves, and lives under a Despotism.

CHAPTER III.

That the war with Mexico might have been averted by Mexico's agreeing to surrender to the United States California and a boundary on the Rio Grande, we do not doubt; nor do we doubt that the President and his Cabinet have been willing, ever since the war began, to end it whenever Mexico would agree to surrender to their demand all of her territory that they have set their hearts on: and that this is what the President means when he speaks of "conquering a peace." But we have still less doubt that the original object of this war, and the sole true cause and motive of it, was CONQUEST, or, in other words, the coercion of Mexico to surrender territory which Mr. POLK ambitioned the *eclat* of "annexing" to the United States. Mr. Secretary BANCROFT, in a letter of instructions to Commodore SLOAT, (then commanding in the Pacific,) on the 12th of July, 1846—two months after the war was legalized by Congress—very frankly disclosed this fact. "*The* OBJECT *of the United States*," said he, "*is, under its rights as a belligerent nation,* TO POSSESS ITSELF ENTIRELY *of Upper California.*"

And, further, said Mr. BANCROFT, "The object of the United States has reference to ultimate peace with Mexico; [*ultimate*, observe; possession of her coveted territory being the *pen*ultimate object;]—and if, at the peace, the basis of the *uti possidetis* shall be established, the Government expects, through your forces, *to be* FOUND IN ACTUAL POSSESSION *of Upper California.*"

The President declared to Congress, it is true, in his Message of last year, that this war with Mexico had not been waged in a spirit of conquest. Would any one suppose, with these instructions to our Naval Commander, and corresponding instructions to our Military Commanders, that he understood the import of this disclaimer? No one can at least misunderstand the purport of his present Message, breathing, as it does, nothing but war, a Conqueror's peace, or the alternative of the annihilation of Mexico.

Nor does the President seem to understand himself in another respect any better than he did when he disclaimed any purpose of conquest in the prosecution of the war with Mexico.

In setting forth, for instance, in the beginning of this Message, his own love of Peace and strenuous efforts to preserve for us its blessings, we must look on him as exhibiting a very signal example of self-delusion. No man's pacific merits could well be less. His course, thus far, in his high office, has, on the contrary, realized in almost every instance, what we said of it a year ago; namely, that, having seen that wars were popular in this country and felt that he himself was not too popular, he had thought to himself, "I will be a War-President, and that will make me popular and render all my opponents and competitors odious." Accordingly, his very Inaugural had a full-blown quarrel with England in it; his first Annual Message announced that he had done nearly all he could to bring that quarrel to a focus; meantime he had secretly taken steps for another with Mexico, by way of making sure of a war somewhere. So that, no sooner had the interposition of the Senate foiled him in his original war-plan, than, by a diligent improvement of his time, he had another fight ready to substitute for that which had been refused him. Grown more wary this time, he took care not to be foiled by any body's discretion; and, though Congress was sitting for five months before he had brought everything to bear, contrived to have a war completely in a blaze, and our succorless army placed in what (their prowess unknown) seemed an almost hopeless predicament, before the country or Congress knew one word of what he was about.

Such are the general and larger facts, as to that merit of loving peace which the President appropriates to himself. If we look closer and scan the particulars of things, we must not only say that President POLK is not possessed of that virtue of a ruler which he claims, and—we regret that we must say it—has shown, and every where in this Message shows, himself utterly indifferent to the carnage and calamities of war.

Of little less than stone, indeed, must his heart be, who can look, without the strongest commiseration, upon the spectacle of a nation reduced to the extremity of distress in which Mexico, known from the first to be incapable of resisting us, now stands. Not one spark of compassion can his breast ever have known, who, after inflicting upon a wretched people, destitute of any resource against us but their hereditary obstinacy, all the slaughter and humiliation which we have every where inflicted upon Mexico, can coolly resolve in his heart that this is *not enough;* not blood enough, not tears

enough; not sufficient ravage, not satisfactory disaster, not national wo and degradation duly deep; for that the victim-people, though covered with blood and prostrate in the dust, *still*, with desperate though feeble hands, *fights*, though vainly, for its hearths and altars—that therefore, as Mexico *does not yield*, we must now begin to strike her "in her vital parts;" and, besides seizing, for ours perpetually, territories the utmost that even Rapacity has dared avow for our aim, most pacifically and peace-lovingly exhorts us to go on ravaging the rest of Mexico, until the nation yields or is destroyed!

Why, the very savage of the court-yard, in other times—that most brutal of mankind, the bully of the bailiwick, who chewed up an ear or a nose, or scooped out with thumb a prostrate adversary's eye—was humane, was generous, in comparison to this; for he, when he fought, never fought the weak, but rather his match; nor when his rival champion lay gasping and helpless under him, game to the last, and ready to die sooner than utter the craven word "enough," would *he* have ever thought of proceeding to mutilate the vanquished, by way of forcing him to confess himself conquered, and then, moreover, have helped himself to whatever he could find in the maimed man's pockets. No: even in *his* hardened heart, there would be a manly pity, because there was courage: if he did not at once raise up his enemy with respect, he at least would not begin "to strike at his vital parts;" and well for him, too, that he would not; for the very crowd of a court green, coarse as it then was, was yet undebauched of every right sentiment by party politics, and would not have suffered in the bully what it now endures in the President.

So much for the mercies and the compunctions of him who proposes, for the lucre of five miserable millions of indemnities, which he himself acknowledges Mexico could not raise the means of paying, to butcher or enslave a whole empire of Republics! But this is not all: how stood the fact of our very right to ask for those indemnities, after having helped ourselves to Texas, for the liberty of peacefully annexing which it is well known that we stood ready, under the Tyler administration, at any time to have given more than the amount of the indemnities as a price? Even in the moment of Annexation, the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs in the House of Representatives, speaking as the organ of the Executive in the House, said, to quiet the last opposition, that he had the liberty of assuring the House that it was ascertained that the injured feelings of Mexico could be healed *with money*. Such was the intimation then held out; and there is every reason to believe that authorized and unofficial offers of at least the amount of the indemnities had been more than once made to Mexico for her rights over Texas.

Finally, however, in the mere confidence of impunity, we took it without a price: but at least, by a last reserve of shame or of pity, upon the remonstrance and the unanswerable showing of Mr. Benton that we were about to take much more than Texas, (which had never possessed any thing beyond the Nueces,) Congress relented, and by its Resolution of Annexation ordered the Executive to adjust *by friendly negotiation* the proper boundary between Texas and Mexico.

And, now, once more for the peace-lovingness of this our President. His duty stood assigned him. He knew that we had *taken* what we had often offered to *buy;* he knew that if, in honor and faith, the indemnities were not cancelled by our seizure of Texas, at least that now an injury

to Mexico had been committed. But he knew that, feeble as she was, she dared not accept that war; and at once, with a pitilessness the most singular, not content though we had just ravished from her a vast and rich territory, nor touched by the forlornness of a nation utterly unable to revenge such treatment further than by the impotent resentment of withdrawing her Ambassador from our Court, he sends Gen. TAYLOR forward, to seize, in addition to all that she had been stripped of, even the petty and barren slip, the mere selvage of sand, the desert space between the Nueces and Rio Grande, which Congress had plainly meant to spare. For this worthless object, and under circumstances so vehemently invoking forbearance and mercy, has Mr. POLK illegally and unconstitutionally involved us in this cruel war, every step in which is plainly, according to the progress of his plans, to lead us further and further into "the bowels of the land."

Yet, in the face of all this, President POLK can talk smoothly of his love of Peace, the "liberality" of the terms he has held out through Mr. TRIST, and especially the generosity with which, wherever the sword goes to crimson the fields of Mexico, the olive-braneh forthwith waves, as fast as its companion smites!

"No conqueror that I ever heard of," says Edmund Burke, "has ever *professed* to make a cruel, hard, and insolent use of his conquest. No! The man of the most declared pride scarcely dares to trust his own heart with this dreadful secret of ambition. But it will appear in its time. And no man who professes to reduce another to the insolent mercy of a foreign arm ever had any sort of good will towards him. The profession of kindness, with that sword in his hand and that demand of surrender, is one of the most provoking acts of his hostility."

Can the President so little conceive how mere a mockery of peace and fraternity is this invading a country with declarations of love, this sweeping off its provinces with a besom made of olive-branches, as to expect that Mexico will not be fired with a double resentment by the imperious and degrading form of negotiation to which he would have her submit? If he *does* expect it, then is he a stranger not only to all the natural and becoming passions of men defending their country, its honor, and its independence, but to all the examples of history and all the suggestions of prudence. War has never thus been made, except by conquerors the most arrogant and merciless. The rule of the Romans, not less wise than magnanimous, was *never to negotiate after a defeat.*

Can the President intend that *we* are to treat in the face of disaster, should it ever come? Dare he declare that the pretended "olive-branch" would not *then* be instantly withdrawn? What, then, is the inevitable effect but to require that they whom we are invading, destroying, and dismembering, should, at every calamitous and bloody defeat, come forward to embrace terms necessarily made harder and more humiliating by utter discomfiture—the rout and dispersion of their armies, or the capture of their forces and cities? Of negotiation under such circumstances, the *væ victis* of Brennus and his Gauls, the "Wo to the Conquered!" is the notorious and inevitable law. The sword stands ever ready, in all such cases, to be cast into the scale of ransom; and none but a nation of cravens and fools ever resigns itself to making terms at such a moment. On the contrary, every brave and every patriotic heart only summons up, at such an instant, a more unconquerable courage; and the resolution "Never to despair of the Republic" becomes the only thought which the citizen will consent to entertain.

Left almost at our mercy as she is, by factions which not even the extremity of public distress seems able to quiet: her Government and her armies in the hands of those who appear equally inefficient for either peace or war; her troops every where driven from the field or lying slaughtered; her ports, her capital, and several of her large provinces in our hands; her treasury as empty as was our own in the gloomiest day of our Revolutionary struggle—still, in the pertinacity of her refusals to treat, Mexico has shown some gleams of that old Numantine spirit which preferred death to surrender; that Iberian obstinacy which the Moor could never quell, nor even the irresistible armies of Napoleon tame. Whether she has caught it from her race, or whether the growing fierceness of a universal national hate such as always springs up in a country overrun by invaders inspires it, we should respect it. It is honorable; it will be found formidable. Such a spirit, once fairly awakened, has ever proved invincible; and so we shall find it to our cost, if, by prolonged and cruel warfare, such as President POLK would have, we stir it up throughout Mexico. Meantime, we say, without hesitation, that she has, in *one* instance at least, manifested a faithfulness of nationality which goes far to redeem all the disgraces of her arms. We speak of her answer, with Gen. SCOTT and his glorious little army at the gates of her capital, to Mr. TRIST'S demand of the cession of New Mexico. That answer was in the following terms:

"That this proposition, under the recognised right of Mexico to deliberate, should be modified; and that, in the pretensions of the United States and the character of his negotiations, its Commissioner leaves no other choice to Mexico than the loss of honor; and it is that which shuts the door to all possibility of making peace.

"To restore this great benefit to the nation, the Government agreed to cede Texas and a part of Upper California, as far as the frontier of Oregon, on the terms which were stated in the instructions; but not even with the reservation that Congress should approve it would the Government consent to cede more—especially not New Mexico, whose inhabitants have manifesfed their desire to make a part of the Mexican family with more enthusiasm than any other part of the Republic.

"These meritorious Mexicans, abandoned to their fate during some administrations, often without protection even to preserve them from the incursions of the savages, have been the most truly patriotic of Mexicans, because, forgetting their domestic complaints, they have remembered nothing but their desire to be of the Mexican family; and many, exposing and sacrificing themselves to the vengeance of the invaders, have rebelled against them; and when their plans were discovered or disconcerted, and their conspiracies frustrated, have again conspired; and would any Government sell such Mexicans as a herd of cattle? Never! Let the nationality of the rest of the Republic perish for them! Let us perish together!"

Here is a sentiment and here a conduct that are worthy of the most magnanimous Republic. They say plainly, "Slaughter us; it is in your power: overrun us; for you can: but not even to save *a part* of our country will we ever consent to sell or give to you brave citizens who hate you and love Mexico." And it is *these* New Mexicans, thus faithful to their Government and thus repaid by its affection and fidelity, that President POLK intends to *drag* into our Union, whether they will or not, by way of making them into a kind of human indemnity, a corporeal capital, an animated scrip, out of which are to be repaid the old losses of certain of our citizens! A great sympathy with love of country must our President have, and marvellously precise notions about the right of a province, a good deal more populous than was Texas in 1837, to choose under what Government it shall live!

CHAPTER IV.

It becomes material, in consequence of the construction put by the President upon the act of Congress appropriating men and money towards the war, to inquire what is the truth in this respect.

When the Twenty-ninth Congress assembled in December, 1845, its attention became at once engrossed by the Oregon question, then depending, and threatening war, and continued to be so much occupied with it, that its suspicions of the purposes of the President in regard to Mexico seem not to have been awakened until the news of the dangerous position of our army on the Rio Grande induced the passage, without a moment's deliberation, of the act authorizing a levy of men and an appropriation of money to succor and sustain it. Relying, without examination, on the President's statement that American blood had been shed on our own soil, his political friends, being the majority of each House, were too easily prevailed upon by one of their party, who wanted to "set a trap for the Whigs," to insert in the bill a declaration that "war existed"—which was not a fact until Congress made it a fact—"by the act of Mexico," which could not be *made* a fact, as the war itself was, even by act of Congress. But this act of legislation was extorted from Congress by a surprise, and cannot be taken as any expression of a desire on the part of Congress to make war upon Mexico for the purpose of wresting from her any territory of hers. Nor have any of the measures since adopted by Congress for the purpose of sustaining this war, had any other end, so far as the intention was concerned, than the bringing about an honorable peace. This war, with whatever object begun, has not been waged *by Congress* with a view to the *conquest* of any part of Mexico, notwithstanding what the President says on this head in his Message. So far from Congress, in appropriating money to carry on the war, having any design to despoil Mexico of her territories on the plea of having acquired by conquest a right of property in them, it is notorious that Congress utterly refused, the only time that a proposition looking to permanent conquest has been presented for its consideration, to give its sanction to it. That proposition was conveyed in the following passage of the President's last year's Annual Message to Congress:

"It may be proper *to provide for the security of these important conquests* [New Mexico and the Californias] by making an adequate appropriation for the purpose of erecting fortifications and defraying the expenses necessarily *incident to the maintenance of our possession* and authority over them."

To this recommendation no response was made. Congress turned a deaf ear to it.

Congress, indeed, can hardly be said, in regard to this war, from its first beginning, to have exercised any volition. Some, perhaps many, members even of the majority of the two Houses, in the last Congress, acted upon the principle of party obligation, rather than any conviction of their own, in sustaining the President's demand for the recognition of his war, and for men and money to carry it on. And, could they have ventured to vote their real sentiments, without dread of the party ban, they would, at any day since the battle of Monterey, willingly have put a stop to this war, as odious to them as to us. As for those Whig members of both Houses who voted in favor of the act recognising the war, and granting the required levies of men and money, they thought only of the peril of that brave army under General TAYLOR, which afterwards so gallantly extricated itself

from danger before reinforcements or supplies could reach it. They endorsed none of the pretexts of the war. Their sympathy was for the safety of the Army and the honor of the National Flag. Their hearts full of that patriot sentiment, they snapped asunder the meshes of the net spread for them in the shape of a Preamble to the Bill, and, considering it no part of the enactment, but the mere *brutum fulmen* of a party, they voted for the Bill, the Preamble notwithstanding. But, in doing so, most certainly neither they nor the Members of opposite politics conceived that they were pledging the lives and fortunes of their fellow-citizens, much less compromitting the national destiny, as the President would now persuade them that they have done, to a career of indefinite War and boundless Conquest, such as that in which the President exhorts them to accompany Him, the Conqueror. Nor, as we have before said, has Congress, by its subsequent legislation, granting supplies of men and money to prosecute this war, ever intended to countenance a war for the purpose of stripping Mexico of her territories, in order to appropriate them to our own use.

Yes, in the Message before us, the President appeals to Congress to legitimate the conquests which he has already made, and, by the act of doing so, to authorize and encourage him to go on, conquering and to conquer. Intoxicated, apparently, with the fumes and the glory of conquests achieved, he intimates to the Representatives of the People, in almost Imperial phrase, his high and firm resolves. "*No Treaty of Peace*," says he, "which does not provide" so and so "*can receive my sanction.*" He sent a Commissioner, some months ago, to the Headquarters of our Army in Mexico to treat of peace, with an "ultimatum" which, he informs Congress, was *under no circumstances* to be yielded. "*I cannot doubt*," says he, "that we should secure and render available the conquests which we have already made." "*I am satisfied*," says he, "that the Provinces of New Mexico and the Californias should never be surrendered to Mexico." And, should Mexico continue to refuse to cede these territories and the line of the Rio Grande as a boundary, he says we "*must* continue to ocupy her country with our troops, taking the full measure of indemnity into our own hands, and *must* enforce the terms which our honor demands." I, MY, MUST! Is this the language or the tone in which Congress should be addresesd by a person who is, like them, but the servant of the People and the Laws? Behold! He, the Conqueror, comes to Congress, far more than he the organ of the sovereign will—to the immediate Representatives of the People, who sometimes make Presidents, and have at all time power to *unmake* them; who alone have the power to make war—which the President took out of their hands when he began *this* war, though they were then in session at no greater distance from him than the Capitol is from the White House—and promulges as a rule of action for this Government a *Code of National Honor*, the leading principle of which is the absolute right and perfect duty of appropriating to ourselves, by means of our mere physical superiority, not only large and valuable Provinces of Mexico, but the whole territory of the Republic, if she still refuses his demand for those Provinces! We trust that there are few of our readers who do not regard with unmitigated disgust this proposition, (to hold these provinces permanently, and hereafter to consider them as a constituent part of our country,) in connection with the recommendation to prosecute *further* conquests "with increased energy and power in the vital

parts of the enemy's country." To our minds this supposed requirement of National Honor is utterly revolting. And, as to the *morality* of it, we remember nothing to equal its unblushing contempt of common honesty, unless it be in a passage of the history of *Jonathan Wild*, by the inimitable Fielding, who makes his Hero argue as follows the point of honor, in reference to an exercise of manual dexterity by one of his associates:

"Do not some by *Honor* mean good-nature and humanity, which *weak minds* call virtues? How, then! Must we deny it to the great, the brave, the noble; to the sackers of towns, the plunderers of provinces, and the conquerors of kingdoms? Again, some few (or I am mistaken) include the idea of *honesty* in their honor. And shall we then say that no man who withholds from another what law, or justice perhaps, calls his own, or who *greatly and boldly deprives him of such property*, is a man of honor? Heaven forbid I should say so in this, or, indeed, in any good company!"

To return, however, to the imperial tone of this Message. It can hardly have escaped the observation of the intelligent reader that the President discourses to Congress as though, in regard to the conduct of this war, the objects for which it is prosecuted, and the terms on which it shall be brought to a close, the Executive branch of the Government (he himself) had the sole right to judge what is right and proper to be done. We have heard, indeed, in the Halls of Congress, powers claimed for the Executive quite as exceptionable as such an assumption would be in relation to THE WAR POWER.

We have heard it argued, for instance, by zealous supporters of the Administration, that, after a declaration or recognition of war, the President, being Commander-in-Chief of the Army, has an absolute right to control the Military Power; and that Congress can check the exercise of that power *only* by withholding supplies.

This is a most unconstitutional and dangerous doctrine. It has no foundation in the Constitution, nor in the character of our institutions. In this, as in other cases, we are too prone to form our views and deduce our arguments from the theory and action of the British Government.

In England the war power is vested in the Sovereign. On the great question of Peace or War, Parliament can exercise no direct power. The withholding of supplies, therefore, is necessarily resorted to as the only means of controlling an abuse of the war power. But in this country that power is very properly placed, by the Constitution, in the Representatives of the People. Congress alone have the right to declare war, to provide for carrying it on by sea or land, in our own or in foreign countries, and to decide *for what object it shall be prosecuted.*

The President is as much bound by acts of Congress in the discharge of his functions as Commander-in-chief as he is bound by the law in the discharge of his civil duties. In both cases he is *the mere instrument of the law.* The war power, as claimed for him, is wholly inconsistent with the principles of our Government. Can the Commander-in-chief, without the authority of law, employ the army and navy in making foreign conquests as his ambition may dictate? If this be so, then is this Government not a limited and constitutional Government, but a Despotism: a One-man power controls it in the most important attribute that belongs to a nation. The military power is the most dangerous that belongs to any Government, and it is that of which a free people will always be jealous. Sensible of this danger and feeling this jealousy, the fathers of the Republic wisely committed this

whole power to the National Legislature. In doing so they placed it in the only safe depositary for it.

We do not mean to say that Congress can direct the Commander-in-chief when and where a battle shall be fought, or under what circumstances cities of the enemy shall be invested and reduced. These are things which must be determined by the military science and skill of those who command our armies. But we mean to say that CONGRESS possess the power *to control the general action of the army.* And we hesitate not to say that, in regard to the existing war, if Congress shall believe that the interests and honor of the country require the exercise of this power on their part, *it should be exercised.*

In what manner this power should be exercised is in the discretion of the two Houses.

We come now to consider what *are* the recommendations of the President, which his servile aiders maintain it to be the duty of Congress unhesitantly to respond to, under the penalty of being denounced as "Mexicans" and "Mexican Traitors."

In approaching this view of the subject, it can hardly be necessary to recur to writers on the Law of Nations to show that, independently of the constitutional obligation upon our President to abstain from war, *this* war was wholly unjust, because wholly unnecessary; and that, even if were not unjust, it ought not to have been prosecuted further than required by the supposed necessity which gave rise to it. If all that the President avers as to the origin of the war were irrefragable truth, it yet could not affect the postion, that the war has been pushed to an extent not required by justice, by national honor, or even by national resentment. It would have ceased long ago, if to "conquer a peace" only had been its object, or if its real object had not been to wrest from Mexico, on the poorest of pretences, territories which she will probably never surrender, to the extent required, but with her national existence.

That this is the object for which the war is to be further prosecuted is no longer disguised by the Executive. The terms upon which alone the President will, under any circumstances, consent to a peace, are, as stated in the Message, the establishment of a western boundary for the United States to the Rio Grande, (which includes *parts* of four Mexican provinces,) and the cession to the United States of the States or Provinces of New Mexico and Upper California. These States, now occupied by our military forces, the President is satisfied should "never be surrendered to Mexico," but held forever, with or without her consent. He invites Congress now to do, what he has heretofore undertaken to do of his own authority, to establish territorial governments over them. He even goes so far as to advise Congress "to hold these provinces permanently, and that they shall hereafter be considered as constituent parts of our country;" this last recommendation being directly in contempt of one of the plainest principles of the law of nations.

These recommendations of the President to Congress, in regard to the prosecution of the War, are perhaps, all things considered, not inconsistent with the spirit in which the President entered upon the discharge of his Executive duties, and the objects which he sought to accomplish by marching an Army into the territories of Mexico, whether his *intention* was to force her into a war or merely to intimidate her into humiliating conces-

sions. Unappeased by the slaughter and devastation with which he has already visited her borders, since he has not yet forced her to a voluntary surrender of her coveted territories, the President proposes not only to continue the war in a savage and vindictive spirit, but to "annex" the provinces above referred to—the acquisition of which is now avowed to have been the object of the war—and to conquer and occupy all the rest of Mexico, should she not meanwhile fall upon her knees, confess her fault, and implore our pardon for having given us the trouble of invading her! That is about the amount of the Executive *recommendations* in regard to the future of this war.

In what manner Congress will respond to these recommendations our readers will learn in due time. What *we* think of the design of conquering all Mexico cannot be more forcibly expressed than in the language of Mr. CALHOUN, in the resolution which he has moved in the Senate. We hold, with that eminent statesman, that "to conquer Mexico and to hold it, either as a province or to incorporate it in our Union, would be inconsistent with the [hitherto] avowed object for which the war has been prosecuted; a departure from the settled policy of the Government, in conflict with its character and genius, and, in the end, subversive of our free and popular institutions." But we go further: *We* believe that to conquer *any part* of Mexico, and to hold it by conquest, as proposed by the President, would be in conflict with the character and genius of our Government, and most dangerous to our free and happy institutions.

Will not the PEOPLE at length awake from their slumber on the brink of a fearful precipice? Are they *content* to depart from that hitherto settled policy of our country which has taught us to avoid all sorts of aggression on neighboring Powers? To depart from the policy of peace and content within our own borders, in pursuit of foreign conquest and dominion? Is there so little of patriotism and pride of race among them that they can tamely consent to see our own nationality degraded, our flag dimmed and blurred by the accession of motley stars, and our population swelled by unknown tribes, who, whilst they will contribute little or nothing to the common stock, will, besides filling our council-halls with many-colored representatives, add immensely to the expenses of our Government?

If the People are prepared to submit to these things—the necessary results of the policy recommended to Congress by the President—have they seriously thought of other inevitable consequences of the career of ambition and conquest in which we are embarked? How few of them have ever reflected, for instance, that one of these consequences is the establishment and perpetuation of A GREAT STANDING ARMY!

CHAPTER V.

The first condition of all conquest upon a large scale is, we need hardly tell any body, the raising and keeping permanently on foot of a numerous and well appointed public force, Naval or Military.

Notwithstanding we have in the field a military force greatly exceeding in number and officers, the extent of the army in service during our last war with Great Britain, the President requires more troops, more

loans. Yes, more money, more men! And *both*, whatever the Message may flatteringly promise, with no visible limit, and to no attainable end. Merely to march upon and occupy all the Mexican Departments and their chief towns and strong places, it is easy enough to see that more than double our present force there must be set in motion in every direction, at more than double the past rate of expenditure. For, in order to conquer a department, though but in name, it must be overrun by a particular expedition for that purpose. This expedition must be strong enough and well-appointed enough to dread no repulse. As it advances, it must secure its communications, not merely that it may command reinforcements, but supplies; for it would be mere madness to depend for food upon regions where the very soil, arid and uncultivated, is as hostile as the inhabitants themselves. Across long and difficult tracts, abounding in dangerous passes, munitions of the commissariat and of ordnance cannot pass, except with strong escorts and by lines along which are frequent armed posts, for resting and refitting the convoys, as well as securing the intervening country and holding the *guerrillas* in check. Well: of the nineteen Departments or States of Mexico, some twelve or fourteen will have to be invaded, conquered, and occupied by as many separate expeditions. Each of these must, as soon as it has got possession of the particular State-capital at which it had struck, fix itself there, as a local army of occupation, which must remain there, to bridle—aye, and to govern—the entire department.

Each State must, besides, have detached corps fixed at a variety of points, where a large population exists, to be by degrees awed into servitude. Certainly you may, with a single corps, seize each State capital and chase away its Government; but what will that avail? What will putting their Government to flight signify to a State fired with hatred of us, through its whole revengeful population? What care they for their feeble authorities, their plague in peace and no help in war? No: annihilate those authorities, if you will; you are, in them, fighting but a shadow: the substance—the people and its animosity—still remains, too widely scattered to be reached, too rancorous to be reconciled.

And now, upon the President's present plan of conquest, what must all this compel? It is only by attempting a conquest in detail, by trying to subdue and hold each separate Mexican State, that any thing can be hoped. And what does this plan inevitably imply? Nothing short of pouring upon Mexico some twelve or fifteen armed divisions, each from three to five, six or eight thousand strong, and, by maintaining an intimate and irresistible possession of all her territory, to weary out resistance, until not merely submission (which would otherwise cease the moment you withdrew your forces) shall come, but a permanent willingness to wear your chains. Need we say that this is but a scheme for fastening our dominion upon Mexico, by *fastening upon ourselves a great and perpetual Standing Army?*

HAVE WE IT NOT ALREADY, the people all unconscious, amidst the din of successful arms and the talk of a subjected empire—sounds that have ever bewitched the unthinking, not less under popular Governments than under despotisms? For in both alike the fatal glory of extended dominion has ever captivated the giddy multitude, quite as sure to be pleased with the fancied addition to its own sway and greatness, as with the less direct honor of its master's. Our politicians greatly mistake, when they

suppose that it is a peculiar "Anglo-Saxon" or American passion which renders the worst part of our people ravenous of the possessions of our neighbors. No: the real impulse is a far more universal one—the appetite of dominion, the vanity of military renown; which has ever made popular the Chief or the King who led on his citizens or his subjects to victorious enterprises against the peace and the freedom of other nations, no matter at how sure a sacrifice of their own.

The people, then, blinded by this unreflecting passion to the plain fact, we ask again, *Have we not already that acknowledged bane of public freedom, a large Standing Army*, the mere phantom of which has so often heretofore, when evoked by conjuring demagogues, filled the popular bosom with supernatural terrors? WE HAVE IT, as it is easy to show; and the *President and his Ministers are demanding a large and permanent addition to it*: yet neither fact seems, as yet, to have excited the slightest public alarm!

What is the present Army of the United States? The report of the Adjutant General exhibits the following statement of what our Army, *as "authorized by law,"* now is:

Authorized regular force, officers and men	30,350
Volunteers for the war	34,171
Twelve months' volunteers	2,119
	36,290
Aggregate force	66,640

SIXTY-SIX THOUSAND MEN!

But even this is not enough; the President calls loudly for ten more regiments of regulars, and twice as many more of volunteers: which, at the full complements, will make thirty-three thousand men more. Thus we have, when the regiments are full, a Standing Army of nearly a HUNDRED THOUSAND MEN!

Behold, then, People of the United States!—you who trembled for your liberties, when the Federalists, in John Adams's day, raised a few thousand regular troops—you whom certain among us have, until within a few years, plied with alarms against even our poor little West Point army, which, except as a school of war, was but a name—behold what those very demagogues, with Jefferson ever on one point of their forked tongues and Federalism on the other, have brought you to! By the grossest Presidential usurpation, they have not only, in order to recover their failing party-popularity, plunged you into a war which that living patriarch of old republicanism, integrity, and wisdom, ALBERT GALLATIN, denounces to you, as if with his last breath, as utterly wrongful, cruel, and impolitic; but they are attempting, under the pretence that the national honor is at stake for the endless and relentless prosecution of *such* a war, to fasten upon you a perpetual standing army.

We need surely not recur to historical examples, nor cite the venerable authorities against such a fatal step. As in some other things, so, happily, there is, as to this, an instinct—we might almost call it a religion—in the public mind. It may have borne that a President of the United States should have contrived, for his own ends, a War which can hardly fail to be as pernicious in its event as it was bad in its origin; but, when the Public sees that, in addition to every other disaster, it is to fix upon us that bane of public freedom, a Perpetual Standing Army, will it not, besides distrusting and rejecting the new demands of patronage and power by the

President, hold him to the strictest account for the use or abuse of the power already entrusted to his hands?

CHAPTER VI.

Having thus shown to our readers that the war which our President has got into, will, if continued, besides exhausting the national resources and credit, end in fastening upon us a larger army than our fathers dreamt of when they most dreaded such a thing, let us direct our attention to the now undisguised object of the War—to CONQUEST, IT POSSIBILITIES, AND ITS ADVANTAGES TO THE CONQUEROR. If the people of the United States desire to be the wise Nation which they suppose themselves to be, it certainly behooves them to consider *what* will be the consequences of adopting the projects of compulsory dominion which the President and his followers are now urging upon them; as, unquestionably, the new career in which it is meant they should embark implies—by its ambitiousness, its violence, its aggressiveness towards the weak, its exchange of the purpose of good to be achieved at home for glory and power to be erected abroad—a reversal of the main public maxims upon which they became and have thus far lived as that great moral being, a nation.

Every writer who is of the smallest authority in the great system of reason and of right called National Law—that system of humane and practical truths, the gradual development and recognition of which make up everything which is, from nation to nation, worthy to be entitled civilization—every such writer (we say) holds that, although the sovereign power of a country may rightfully alienate its *unpeopled* territories, yet it cannot dispose, but by their consent, of its inhabited ones; and they carry this so far as to maintain that not even despots are competent to make, with any validity, such a transfer of their subjects. So that, by the consent of all respectable authors, *dominion cannot be acquired*, even from or to arbitrary rulers, *by any such compulsory means as those which the President and his abettors propose to employ in Mexico.*

Such being the principles which have come to be received even in the Old World, among States, whose institutions and practices, as to public right, still retain, in many particulars, rules originating in ancient and arbitrary ages, how should *we* pretend to set them aside?—*we*, who boast ourselves the favorite progeny of Justice and of Freedom, banished so long, but now once more descending to bless the earth? Is it the "Model Republic" which is now to subvert what Kings themselves have been at last taught to respect? Are we, the refuge and the hope of Humanity, the gaze and the guide of every thing Liberal, the morning star of a new day of Right and of Peace, before whose rising beam Tyranny was to skulk away and the oppressed rejoice—are *we* to call back the wrongfulness of those iron times which seemed departed forever? Are we, the emancipators, to refit the cast-off chains of tyrants and conquerors, and re-manacle each weaker nation that we can kidnap?

This principle of a nation's free-will—its right to be governed only by its own consent; its indefeasible equality and independence of all nations—is the fundamental axiom upon which stands our own existence as a so-

ciety; for, in our Declaration of Independence, the *first* proposition as to individual man is that he is "born free and equal" to each other individual; and the *first* proposition as to men associated in society is, that they have an inalienable right to choose how and by whom they shall be governed.

But the principle thus made the capital one of our own great National Bill of Rights is not found there only. It has a still loftier source; because that source is one which the degeneracy and infatuation of no one people can turn from veneration into scorn. The doctrine itself was derived into our Declaration of Independence from the Philosophy of Popular Rights, then just beginning to spread over France, and from France over the continent of Europe. But this philosophy had itself borrowed the truth from a system nobler and more solid—from National Law, and the wise and liberal friends of mankind who led the way in the great science which enlightens nations as to their rights and duties in society, and is, as to them, what Revelation and Morals are as to individuals. The great science had already taken, for its necessary foundation, its first indispensible idea, the same great principle: and he who will consult its ablest compendiary, Vattel, will find that, in his preliminary chapter, he assumes and enforces, as the necessary basis of the whole system, these truths:

"That man, in his natural state, is a rational and responsible being: that, as such, he is necessarily possessed of a free will, that he may pursue his own duties and happiness—in other words his self-preservation—by obeying the laws of his nature; and that, until he becomes the member of a society, he is free and independent of all other men: That when he enters into a society, he only vests in it the natural rights which, in common with all its other members, he held: that the collective society is, therefore, invested with all the natural rights of individuals—a perfect right to its own free will; an entire equality with all other societies; a right to consult its own happiness and self-preservation: an indefeasible and perpetual right, therefore, to be governed only with its own consent: so that another society, however strong, has no more right to deprive it of these, its indispensible faculties, the conditions of its existence, than has an individual man to take away the life of his fellow-man. A nation, in short, has no more right to murder or enslave another nation, than has a private person to murder or enslave another man."

Such, then, are not merely the inherent principles of our own Government, but the sacred and universal ones of all public law, freedom, and humanity, which the President would have us set aside and abolish forever, by the conduct that he urges us to pursue towards Mexico. He would have us rescind our Declaration of Independence, abrogate the great Code of Nations, and dissolve all the great principles not merely of our own Constitution, but of Free Institutions every where. He would have us make war, not only upon Mexico, but the highest social truths: not only upon the sanctity of another and a weaker nation's life and liberty, but upon whatever can protect the weak from the strong any where; not only upon humanity and justice, but upon all in our own Government which was meant to embody them.

And now, to justify or to induce a contradiction so total and so flagrant of our own and of all other good principles, what is or can be alleged?

The suasives obviously reckoned on (by him who has made and those who favor this bloody experiment on our own institutions) as those which would most prevail with our people are *not* the expectation of getting justice done to our claimants of indemnities—(for towards these a complete indifference reigned until it was found that they would afford a useful topic of excitement against Mexico and in favor of annexation)—nor any improvement of our government, or laws, or freedom, or wealth at home; but they

are the national vanity of successful arms, the pride of dominion, and the especial lust for other people's lands which has been by some attributed to us as a characteristic of our race.

In the lust, as a particular passion of our countrymen, we do not believe. Of those whom it is supposed to infect not one in fifty expects any part in the soil. But who cares to steal for another's benefit? It is a personal not a national cupidity, if it exists. In a word, what has been as falsely as immorally called "love of land-stealing," by way of giving it a gayer and less severe name than the stern old one of Rapine, is nothing less than that ruthless vanity of empire and military glory which has besotted so many nations, and made them mere beasts of draught, ever ready to harness themselves to the triumphal car of him who could lead them on to the slaughter and enslavement of whole countries. The soil of Mexico is already appropriated entire; there is therefore little scope for land-appropriation there; and they who ply our people with reasons for this war do not try to fire them with examples of persons who successfully *stole lands*, but inflate them with notions of national grandeur and power, talk battalions and armies (not agricultural implements) to them, and flourish away, like boy-historians, about *that mighty Republic of old Rome*, and *how she was the mistress of the earth!* Pleasant statesmen! Most profound historians! Was it Rome herself—that is, the *plebs*, the common people, the "bone and sinew" of the city—that rose to all this glory and dominion? Or was it only Consuls, Senators, Generals, and by-and-by sanguinary Emperors—a Tiberius, a Nero, a Domitian—who reaped all that harvest of splendor and command which the mere people had fattened with their blood?

Nothing is better known than that, among the Romans, the oppression, the wretchedness, and at last the degradation, the corruption, and the insolence of the inferior orders grew in proportion to the grandeur of the empire; until, at last, left powerless amidst the wide military strength founded originally in their blood, the people of Rome lost every thing but the right of voting for Consuls (their one-year Presidents) or raising mobs; and, sinking lower and lower as their empire became vaster and vaster, saw the victorious army of a Cinna and Marius or Sylla poured upon their city, to bathe it in the blood of alternate proscriptions; or beheld a Clodius spread terror through their streets with armed bands of gladiators and slaves; or witnessed the almost successful conspiracy of a Cataline to give Rome to pillage and flame; embraced with delight the usurpation of Julius Cæsar; drove out the patriot Brutus who had struck down the self-made dictator-for-life; and becoming, under the Emperors, beggars as well as slaves, sought nothing of the tyrants whom the Prætorian guards made or unmade at will and for largesses, but "*panem et circenses*," gifts of bread and public shows. Such was the popular happiness and greatness under that conquering Roman Republic whose name and example are the main ones now held up by the Conquest Party to allure our people to their own enslavement in that of other nations.

Of Athens, which being a democracy, grew ambitious of commanding armies and making conquests from the midst of its market place, little more need be said than to remind our readers of Thucydides and Plutarch; the vain projects of the Peloponesian war; the gay and grand expedition to Sicily; its total defeat and destruction; the siege, the plague, and finally the capture of Athens and the demolition of her walls by Lysander. Such

was the price which she paid for attempted empire; for which, indeed, by the most obvious reasons, free and especially popular Governments are, of all others, the most unfit. It is armies that must make conquests; and, where large armies are continually employed, the Government itself must become military.

So much for antiquity: let us now survey modern times.

We need not mention Alaric, Genseric, Attila, nor any of those savage conquerors who revenged upon Rome the destruction of so many nations, the blood of her "thrice-three-hundred triumphs." These wild invasions left empty the lands from which they went forth, and carried desolation and slavery to those upon which they were directed. They all, however, served (as conquests must ever do) to make more despotic the kings who conducted them. Next, rising up amongst one of the races of the world the most indomitable to arbitrary power—the Arabians—comes the conquering Mahommed and his successors. They overran vast regions, and established despotisms, religious and civil, every where. What is left of them? Arabia has shrunk back again into poverty, barbarism, and insignificance. Her wretched tribes aspire no longer to plague or pillage realms, but are quite content when they can plunder a caravan. Next comes Charlemagne, an able and politic, we may even say virtuous, prince; but all whose military abilities could found only an empire which fell to pieces under his immediate successors. Then succeeded the Crusades; then the Venitian and Genoese conquests in the Levante, out of which grew, for the former State, that tyrannic oligarchy under which her people groaned so long. The Turks came next; who, in their native deserts a free tribe, have, by dint of conquering, become utter slaves. From them we may descend to the wily ambitious Emperor, Charles the Fifth. What better was Spain, for even an instant, for all his acquisitions? They found her King only, in the Castilian Court, "the first of her gentlemen;" they left her as mere a tyranny as could well be. The same is true of Portugal, with dominions that once almost girded the earth. We may place next the mad career of Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, who (very naturally) ruined his own kingdom much more than any of those he attacked. Coming next to France, under Louis the Fourteenth, it is enough to repeat what the great Montesquieu says—that it was most fortunate for her that Louis's project for conquering all Europe failed: for that its success would have ruined her forever. The same is no doubt equally true of her latest and most terrible conqueror, who, after countless victories, saw Russians crown a King in Paris, France reduced back to her original boundaries, and himself a sort of imperial convict transported to another hemisphere to die. Always bellicose and ambitious, it is remarkable how little France has been able to keep of all that she ever won beyond her natural limits. Take Italy, for instance, which one of her great authors remarks that she had already invaded nine several times; she has since then entered it again under Napoleon, and now she has not an inch of it in her possession!

CHAPTER VII.

Having discussed somewhat at large the question how far the most successful Conquests are likely to be of advantage to the mass of the People

of any country; having shown that, in their inevitable results, the most successful Conquests are always dangerous to the people in whose name they are achieved, and frequently more deleterious to the liberties of the conquering nation than of that which is conquered, we shall, in this chapter, bring to a close all that we have at present to say upon so much of the late Message of the President to Congress as relates to the Mexican War.

We shall take it for granted that our readers generally are of opinion with us, that, except upon great necessity, Peace with all the world is the policy most consistent with the genius of our Government and with the interest and happiness of our People; and that, as a necessary consequence, a War for Conquest—for the acquisition of territory coveted by any branch of this Government—not only can have no charms for them, but is as odious as any action of individuals of analogous character would justly be. We suppose we may take it for granted, also, that our readers do not desire the force of our army to be quadrupled merely to swell Executive patronage, nor yet to gratify the military propensities of those who throng to the seat of government in pursuit of commissions and contracts; and that they would willingly dispense with the necessity of paying heavy taxes on tea and coffee now, and presently on every article which they consume, wear, or use, in the various vocations by which they live, in the shape of excises and direct imposts—for which the organs of the Administration are already, in contemplation of prolonging the war, preparing the public mind. We think, moreover, that we cannot mistake the general sense of the People of this country when we express the confident belief, that, if it were left to their suffrage, to annex to the United States without price, whole Mexican provinces, with their hybrid population, their ignorance and their vices, and to place them on an equality of representation and rights in this Government with that race which constituted the original thirteen States, and has now expanded itself into more than double the number, they would without hesitation repel the dangerous gift. Nor can we err in the conviction, that not one in ten of our readers believe that this war is necessary or useful, or would hesitate to call upon his particular Senator or Representative in Congress to put an instantaneous stop to it if he were satisfied that it could be done with honor.

It *can* be done with honor—with much more honor, be assured, than can attend the most successful prosecution of the war.

Have our fellow-citizens, to whatever political party they belong, seriously considered for what object, other than conquest for conquest's sake, this war is to be further prosecuted, as recommended by the President, into the vitals of Mexico? We will tell them. It is *to vindicate the consistency of the President of the United States* in affirming, in the first communication which he ever addressed to Congress, that the boundary of the United States had been peacefully extended to the Del Norte, and, in connexion with that declaration, in asserting to Congress (in his Message of May 11, 1846, informing them of the mischief which he had brewed) that the war was begun by the act of Mexico. In making these assertions, and in repeating the latter of them no less than *seventeen times*, in one form or other, in the Message now before us, it is not at all necessary to charge the President with intentional falsehood. Say that he has but labored under a mental delusion, or a misapprehension of facts, it is still no less certain that the alleged facts upon which he placed this war at the outset were not facts;

that the war, thus begun, has been hitherto prosecuted upon the same false issues, or upon other grounds which have no sense in them; and, if this war is to be prosecuted until Mexico either surrenders to us all her coveted Provinces or we extinguish and blot her out from the roll of Nations, the original assertion in the President's message of December, 1845, "that the jurisdiction of the United States has [had] passed the Capes of Florida, and *been peacefully extended to the Del Norte*," or Rio Grande, will still be its only basis.

It was to maintain the truth of this assertion that the war was unconstitutionally begun by the President; it was to maintain the equally false assertion that "American blood has [had] been shed upon American soil," that the President demanded from Congress the recognition of the war; it is upon the same grounds, or upon worse than none, that the President now calls upon Congress to prosecute the war, if need be, until all Mexico is overrun, to compel her to surrender the territories which he (not the country) wants, by way of indemnity for our expenses in a war which, he says, she began. For, as to all the other grounds upon which the President recommends the prosecution of the war "with increased energy and power in the vital parts of the enemy's country"—such as that the subjugation of Mexico would be the means of enlightening the Mexicans, of improving their social state, and of increasing their happiness, &c.—they are, in the language applied to them by Mr. Gallatin, but shallow attempts to disguise unbounded cupidity and ambition.

Now, we put to our readers these questions:

First. Do you believe that, in December, 1845, the boundary of the United States had been extended to the Rio Grande?

Secondly. Do you believe that the Mexican province of Tamaulipas, east of the Rio Grande, was, on the 11th day of May, 1846, American soil!

Thirdly. Do you believe that the existing war was begun by the act of Mexico?

Fourthly. Do you believe that, failing in our purpose of compelling Mexico to propose to surrender to us her provinces of Tamaulipas, New Mexico, and Upper and Lower California—that, in a word, as things now stand, "we *must*," in the language of the Message before us, "overrun her country with her troops, taking the whole country into our hands, and holding it by way of indemnity for five millions of dollars of questionable claims, or of indemnity for the expenses to us of a war *which we* began?

Do you, or a majority of you, answer *No* to each of these questions, then we present to you the *true and only remaining question* which you have to consider in reference to the further prosecution of this war to the extent and in the manner proposed in the Message:

Are you willing to prosecute, for an indefinite number of years, this war against Mexico, at the cost of a hundred millions of dollars, and at least ten thousand lives each year, for the purpose of *vindicating the consistency of* James K. Polk? That is the question.

January 1, 1848.